

## Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act Will Likely be the First Bill Obama Signs into Law

Washington, DC - Rep. Linda Sánchez, a co-sponsor of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, voted today to give final approval to legislation that will begin to close the gender pay gap in this country by reversing a Supreme Court decision that has kept women from pursuing pay discrimination claims. The bill now goes to President Obama and will likely be the first major piece of legislation he signs into law.

“Pay inequality hurts all Americans, from the kitchen counter to the corporate board room,” said Congresswoman Sánchez, a co-sponsor of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. “Employers can no longer justify paying women less with excuses that date from the 1950’s. When women unfairly receive lower wages, they have a harder time paying for everyday needs like food and healthcare, so their families suffer.”

The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act would clarify that each discriminatory paycheck or compensation constitutes a violation of the Civil Rights Act. As long as workers file their charges within 180 days of a discriminatory paycheck, their charges would be considered timely. This was the law prior to the Supreme Court’s May 2007 decision.

“This issue is as basic as it gets,” said Rep. Linda Sánchez. “You should not be paid less because you are a woman. Congress today has reasserted itself, putting its foot down to declare once and for all that Americans should get equal pay for equal work regardless of race, sex, color, national origin, or religion.”

The Ledbetter decision has already been cited in hundreds of discrimination cases. Not only have pay discrimination cases been adversely impacted, but protections guaranteed by the Fair Housing Act, Title IX, and the Eighth Amendment have also been affected.

The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act would apply to workers who file claims of discrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, or disability.

Lilly Ledbetter worked for nearly 20 years at a Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. She sued the company after learning that she was paid less than her male counterparts at the facility, despite having more experience than several of them. A jury found that her employer had unlawfully discriminated against her on the basis of sex.

However, the Supreme Court said that Ledbetter had waited too long to sue for pay discrimination, despite the fact that she filed a charge with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as soon as she received an anonymous note alerting her to pay discrimination.

While Ledbetter filed her charge within 180 days of receiving discriminatory pay, the court ruled that, since Ledbetter did not raise a claim within 180 days of the employer’s decision to pay her less, she could not receive any relief. Under the Ledbetter decision, employers can legally discriminate forever, so long as they keep it secret for the first 180 days, and employees in Ledbetter’s position would be forced to live with discriminatory paychecks for the rest of their careers.